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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

September 5, 1998

The Year Of The Buckeye

National Polls, Mags Give OSU Early Nod As College Game's Best

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

If any of the preseason magazines and polls are on target, the 1998 college football season could be one to remember at Ohio State.

The Buckeyes, whose national championship drought reaches almost 30 years back to the 1968 season, are nearly a consensus preseason pick as the nation's No. 1 team.

"For a long time, people have complained around here that Ohio State doesn't get the national attention it deserves," said OSU senior linebacker Jerry Rudzinski.

"We get to be No. 1 and now people are complaining that it will make us overconfident. You think everybody would be silenced. But now they don't like the No. 1 ranking. So we've got to play with the cards we're dealt and have fun with it."

At face value, the pundits could be looking at Ohio State as a compromise candidate in this year's race. The Buckeyes have 17 returning starters and both kickers back from last year's 10-3 team.

But strong cases could also be made for last season's co-national champions, Michigan and Nebraska, as well as the team that defeated OSU handily in the Sugar Bowl — Florida State.

But safety Damon Moore says OSU has the early top spot on merit.

"I believe, personally, we're the best team in the country," Moore said. "We should be No. 1. That's a credit to the players we have coming back and the young guys coming in to help us."

"If I'm at Michigan or Nebraska, hopefully they're feeling they should be No. 1. If not, they're not competing like they should."

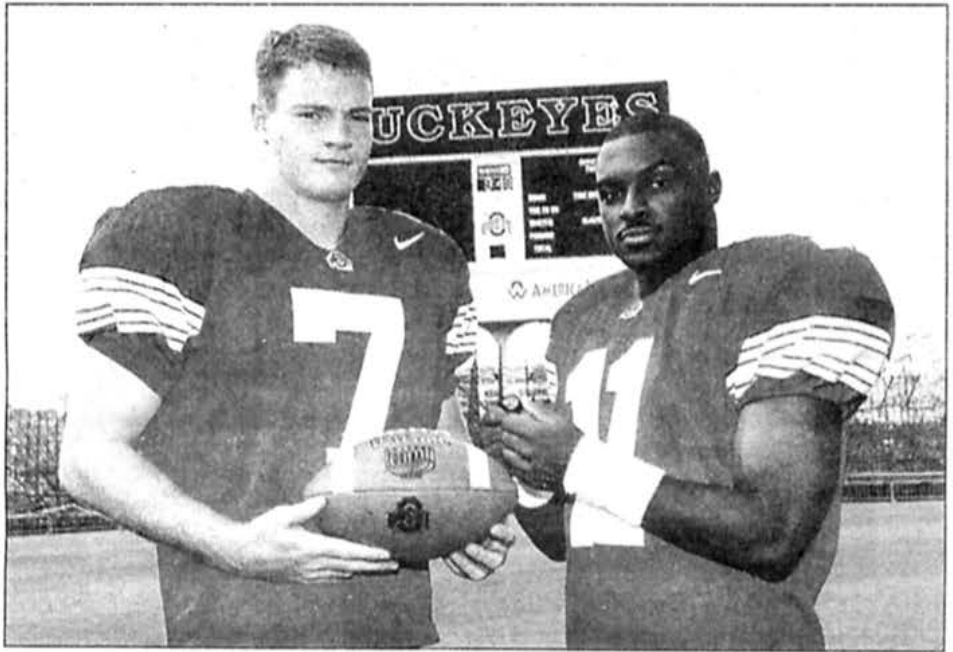
"We're just going to have to go out on the field and let our play prove everything. If we are No. 1, that will show it, and if we're not, that will be shown."

Moore is one of at least three players — All-American linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer and guard Rob Murphy are others — who need to complete summer course work in order to regain their eligibility (see Ohio State Insider, page 4).

Coaches and players alike are hoping that is the only dark cloud that descends on the Buckeyes this season.

"Because we're ranked No. 1, it doesn't mean we have to do a lot of things differently," said OSU coach John Cooper, beginning his 11th year with the Buckeyes. "You can't work any harder than we've been

**BSB's
1998
FOOTBALL
PREVIEW**



JEFF BREDA

LUCKY 7-11 — Quarterback Joe Germaine (7) and corner Antoine Winfield will have the spotlight this season, leading Ohio State's offense and defense. Germaine is in his first year as a starter, while Winfield is the model of consistency on D.

'Proud And Humbled' To Be No. 1, Cooper Readies His Troops

By STEVE HELWAGEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State has long been recognized as one of the nation's top football programs.

However, it had been 18 long years since the Buckeyes had reigned as the country's No. 1 team.

That drought is over, as both the USA Today/ESPN coaches poll and Associated Press media poll have named Ohio State as the No. 1-ranked team in their respective preseason polls.

"It's been 18 years," said OSU coach John Cooper, who was in his fourth year at Tulsa when the Buckeyes last topped the poll. "It's been too long. That's the obvious thing. But that's our job as players and coaches, to build the best program we can."

"I'm proud and humbled to be the football coach of the team picked No. 1 in the country. Now it's up to us to live up to that ranking."

"There is a high expectation level. Nobody is going to outwork us, that I know."

The coaches poll was released Aug. 6, while the AP poll came out Aug. 15. Cooper was happy to hear both polls reached the same verdict.

"The coaches poll came out earlier in the week and we were No. 1 in that," Cooper said. "I'm glad the sportswriters agreed with the coaches for a change."

Obviously the preseason poll is the most subjective of all. The Buckeyes do not take the field for an actual game until Sept. 5 at West Virginia, a team rated a very respectable 11th in the initial AP poll.

But the Buckeyes were picked No. 1 in a fast field that included their Sugar Bowl opponent Florida State, perennial national contender Florida, and defending co-national champions Nebraska and Michigan.

"I didn't know if we'd be No. 1 or not," Cooper said. "I thought we would be ranked somewhere in the top 10. I don't know if we should be No. 1 or 5 or 10 or not that good."

"The fact we had a pretty good team last year and

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COVER STORY: OHIO STATE AS NO. 1

OSU Ends 18-Year Drought Since Last No. 1 Ranking

Continued From Page 1

had so many people back probably figured in."

Last year's Sugar Bowl, a game that saw Florida State roll to a 31-14 win, was earmarked as the "playoff" game to decide this year's preseason No. 1 team.

"We felt like that," said OSU flanker Dee Miller.

But OSU's 17 returning starters, including All-Americans such as linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer and cornerback Antoine Winfield, probably caught the voters' attention.

"We felt we would be ranked anywhere from No. 1 to No. 3. But the media must have felt that with everybody coming back, we have enough talent to be considered No. 1," Miller said.

Even though it is just the preseason poll — the Buckeyes will need to finish in the top two to reach the national championship game in the Fiesta Bowl — the players will take it for now.

"I was naturally excited when I heard about it," said OSU cornerback Ahmed Plummer. "That's something you grow up as a kid and want to be. I know it's just preseason rankings, but maybe this might be the change we need."

"Maybe we need this little boost to believe in ourselves, work hard and

maintain that national ranking. I'm looking forward to this season."

Uncharted Waters

Since the AP instituted a preseason poll in 1950, no team has gone wire-to-wire and led the poll each week from start to finish.

However, eight teams have opened No. 1 in the preseason, lost the spot and regained it after the bowls. Florida State's 1993 team was the most recent team to do it.

Ohio State is tops in the AP poll for the first time since the preseason poll in 1980. Coach Earle Bruce's Buckeyes, coming off an 11-1 season and narrow Rose Bowl loss to USC, went out and fell behind visiting Syracuse 21-0 in their opener before rallying to a 31-21 win.

Alabama took over the top spot, although Georgia ended up as the national champion. The Buckeyes ended up 9-3 and ranked 15th.

Including 1980, this marks the sixth time OSU has been the preseason No. 1 in the AP poll, following the 1958, '62, '69 and '70 teams. OSU claimed AP poll national championships in 1942, '54 and '68.

OSU's longest stints in the top spot were eight weeks in both the 1973 and '75 seasons.

OSU's ranking will be tested right off



STEVE HELWAGEN

WRITING HISTORY — Grand expectations don't seem to faze Ohio State linebacker Jerry Rudzinski, shown here sharing a laugh with a fan at Ohio State's media day. Rudzinski is one of 17 returning starters for the preseason No. 1 Buckeyes.

the bat. A lackluster showing at West Virginia could help No. 2-ranked Florida State, which faces Texas A&M Aug. 31 at the Kickoff Classic. OSU holds just a narrow lead over the Seminoles in the initial polls.

The Buckeyes enter the year with a 43-7-1 (.853) record in games as the nation's No. 1-ranked team.

But the Buckeyes say 11 games from now — after they have also played the likes of Missouri, Michigan State, Iowa and Michigan — is when it will really count.

"All that matters is how we finish," said Katzenmoyer. "It doesn't matter how we start. It's cool, I guess. But I would rather be No. 1 at the end."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE QUARTERBACKS

QB Slot Is Germaine's And Germaine's Alone

By MIKE WACHSMAN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

All eyes in Ohio Stadium will once again be on the quarterback position, but unlike previous seasons, only one arm will grab the attention.

Gone are the days of the two-headed QB monster. Here is the time for level-headed Joe Germaine to put his indelible stamp on the Ohio State Buckeyes in what could be a season of destiny.

"It's a great opportunity for me," Germaine said. "I'm very excited about it. It seems like I've been waiting for a long time to be the starter here. I just want to get things started."

OSU quarterbacks coach Tim Salem is technically breaking in a new starting QB, but Germaine has played enough the past two years that he's really considered a returning starter.

"One thing that's always nice is when you have an offense with a lot of experience and a lot of returning players," Salem said. "The quarterback position is even more important, so we're blessed to have Joe coming back."

The Buckeye offense has been humming early in camp, with the passing game looking unstoppable at times. Germaine looks confident taking control of the reins, and his timing and touch have been almost flawless.

When you're calling the signals at Ohio State, the spotlight is on you. Germaine doesn't mind that, and Salem believes his QB will thrive, given the nature of the OSU offense. Familiarity breeds admiration in this case.

"It's not how I respond to Joe or how he responds to me," Salem said. "It's how those other players look at him. The offensive players are all very appreciative of him and look to him no matter what his demeanor is."

Germaine To The Equation

If the Buckeyes are to flourish offensively, Germaine will be the catalyst. He finished last season ranked third in the country in passing efficiency — behind UCLA's Cade McNown and first-round draftee Ryan Leaf of Washington State — posting a gaudy 151.88 rating, tossing 16 touchdowns against nine interceptions.

And Germaine is no ordinary Joe. He's a detail-driven perfectionist who tries to get the most out of a situation. So he's not 6-4. Doesn't matter. He's got the understanding of a coach, the heart of a warrior and the touch of Midas.

Everything could indeed be golden this year.

"Joe Germaine is one of the toughest football players I've been around," Salem said. "The quarterback position is different because the ball leaves his hand and travels downfield, and the crowd goes with that and doesn't see what happens to the quarterback."

"He stands there like a totem pole and gets his ass knocked off. Joe is tough mentally and physically, he doesn't let mistakes linger, and he's got a physical presence about him that says he won't let anyone wear him down."

As usual, Germaine shifts the attention to his teammates, content in the idea that if he does his job effectively, they'll be the ones to reap the glory.

"We've got a lot of weapons," Germaine said. "Hopefully we can get everybody a lot of catches. We have great receivers, a lot of depth there, a lot of running backs. We just have to execute our offense and do what we're supposed to do. That should make us successful."

There is talk of implementing some shotgun this year, and don't be surprised if Germaine gets the snap, drops back three steps and fires. There will be instances where three and maybe even four receivers take the field at the same time, but most of the offense should be



OPEN UP A SIX-PACK — Though Joe Germaine (7) is the starter, OSU has new depth at quarterback this year, including, front, left to right, Steve Bellisari, coach Tim Salem and Ty Masciarelli, and, back, Austin Moherman, Mark Garcia, Germaine and David Priestley.

familiar to astute Buckeye followers.

"We're not going to change the offense very much," Germaine said. "To get where we want to be, we have to be able to run the ball and throw it. We can't be one-dimensional."

The unflappable Germaine rarely shows emotion, preferring to let his actions do the talking. Careful observation shows, though, that there's an extra spring in his step, a purpose to his gait and even a smile creasing his boyish face.

"He's very excited," Salem said. "He's had a grin on his face since we started summer conditioning back in June. He's been anxious to get started and is looking forward to the challenge of playing this fall."

Joe Is Not Alone

While the QB race is a one-man affair, attention will be given to the backups, too.

Veteran Mark Garcia is still itching for a chance to play, and though his spring concluded on a sour note with a poor performance in the Spring Game, he seemed to pick up the offense and understand progressions much better than in past seasons.

"I think if I was given the opportunity to play I could do the job," Garcia said. "It's just a matter of getting that opportunity and making the most of it when it happens."

Garcia, who threw for 175 yards and a TD last year in spot duty, has been hit-and-miss early in camp, looking precise on one throw and off-kilter the next. Though a veteran, he has to hear young footsteps coming up behind him.

Not only does redshirt frosh Austin Moherman look the part of quarterback, he's been up to the challenge of playing it, too. His throws have zip, though they don't always hit the intended target, and he doesn't seem fazed by the youthful mistakes he makes.

Classmate David Priestley has been up and down, showing more arm strength but not always the best recognition. The effort is definitely there, though, and Salem likes to see that.

If all three keep improving, there may

be some playing time in the cards.

"The one thing in spring ball we did was give the four quarterbacks we had all equal turns in reps," Salem said. "The situation there was to get them all better, improve each individual. We're happy with their progress."

Freshman Steve Bellisari, a tall lefty, could throw a monkey wrench into the works. He's shown great poise for a rookie — though none should be surprised after watching his brother Greg — and makes throws that no one else on the squad can. He has a rocket for an arm and looks comfortable in the offense, showing all the makings of a future star.

"Steve understands the game and has a lot of intangibles you learn from growing up around the sport," Salem said. "We're happy he's around and he's going to be a nice addition to our group."

Experience The Best Teacher

Germaine definitely has some unfinished business to take care of this season — namely piloting the Buckeyes for a complete season and wiping out the memory of his one previous start — the 1996 Michigan game, a 13-9 Ohio State loss.

He's looking forward to the challenge game by game, beginning with West Virginia Sept. 5, and Salem feels his maturation process will be a huge benefit.

"The step up that's taken place is due to the fact he became a senior," Salem said. "Along with the other seniors we have on this team, Joe is an important part of this team. We have seniors that work very hard, and this is the last hurrah for them. Joe is one of those guys that knows we've played and competed at a high level, and now we have to find a way to go just a little higher. He's responded to that."

Germaine admits that it feels like yesterday when the Buckeyes offered him a scholarship out of Scottsdale Community College in Arizona, and though he made a name for himself there, he wants his final chapter as a college quarterback to be the best.

"It's gone by real fast," Germaine admitted. "It's been a great time I've spent here. Hopefully we can finish with a bang."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE RUNNING BACKS

Buckeye RBs Will Team Up To Produce Numbers

By MARK PODOLSKI
Special To Buckeye Sports Bulletin

The pecking order is a formality for Ohio State running backs coach Tim Spencer.

Sure, junior tailback Michael Wiley is penciled in as the No. 1 tailback in preparations for the Sept. 5 opener vs. West Virginia. But the contributions from several other backs, including flashy Derek Combs and bruising Joe Montgomery, could bring OSU back to the days when Eddie George ran wild over opposing defenses en route to the 1995 Heisman Trophy.

While the school would be hard-pressed to find another individual to emerge with the same numbers (1,927 rushing yards, 24 touchdowns) during George's record-setting season, it's obvious Wiley, Combs and Montgomery have the ability to team up for the same type of production.

"I think it's a great combination," said Montgomery, who is completely healthy after a devastating knee injury two seasons ago. "Mike will get in and run by defenses and I'll get in and punish them. I like the punishing part anyway, considering what I've been through."

Montgomery's road to his senior season hasn't been a pleasant one, considering he's had to deal with adversity nearly every season. His most productive season occurred two seasons ago prior to sustaining the knee injury. He gained 460 yards for a 6.8 average and scored twice in eight games.

"I don't think Joe was himself last year, but I feel good now," Spencer said. "I'm quite certain he's 100 percent. He's a young man who's worked hard and been through a lot of stuff here. I'm looking for him to finish his career on a good note."

Spencer knows a healthy Montgomery is vital to OSU's rushing attack, which lost a bit of its effectiveness at times last season thanks to an inexperienced offensive line. Who knows what kind of effect the 5-11, 216-pound back might have had on last year's rushing attack.

"You can't just go out there and play physical and hard like Joe plays if you're not ready," Spencer said. "That was hard for Joe last season."

What could be even harder for opposing defenses is tackling Montgomery, who appears as sharp as ever in early season drills. He also appears determined, almost driven to close his college career with a bang.

"I had a lot of emotion and determination to come back early last season," he said. "I came back in five months when people were telling me it would take 12 months. That in itself motivated me. But I was faced with reality when the season started because I was in a lot of pain. I was probably about 55 percent. Now I'm 100 percent."

Wiley's Turn In Spotlight?

That's good news for the coaching staff and even better news for Wiley, who welcomes the competition for playing time.

"Joe's a great back and we're going to have a lot of competition, but I'm confident in my ability and I'm going in No. 1 and intend to come out No. 1," said Wiley.

"My goal is to come out and play hard. I like to humble myself. I just want to



JEFF BREDEN

RUNNERS IN RESERVE — Ohio State boasts a seemingly endless supply of running backs, beginning with, front row, left to right, Derek Combs, Matt Keller, Joe Montgomery, Scott Fulton and Charlie Sanders. Pictured in the back row are Sean Penny, Jermon Jackson, Jamar Martin, coach Tim Spencer, Michael Wiley, Jerry Westbrook and Jonathan Wells.

contribute to the team. If they give me the ball five times a game, I'll take it. If it's 20 times, that'll be a little better, but I just want to work hard.

"It feels great. You work all your life to be a starter at a big-time college program. I had a good spring and I'm looking to continue it."

Wiley's first two seasons were as exciting as it gets. He scored the first three times he touched the ball as a freshman, then, as a sophomore, ran back a kickoff 100 yards for a touchdown against Bowling Green, completed three of four passes (including a touchdown pass), and rushed for 588 yards.

"I think Michael is going to surprise a lot of people," said fullback Matt Keller. "When it comes down to it, Michael will be a great back. Last year he had to share time with Pepe (Pearson), and the tailback position has a lot to do with rhythm. With Michael getting the bulk of the carries, I think he'll be fine."

Wiley's all-purpose ability was more than enough for the OSU coaching staff to proclaim him the No. 1 back.

"I think Michael is an exciting player," Spencer said. "But I think a lot of guys are exciting players. We've got a lot of guys with the ability to break a lot of runs. But Michael's worked his butt off and he's anxious to be the man."

Spencer is also anxious to see what OSU's young corps of tailbacks can do as well, most notably Combs, a second-year player, and Jonathan Wells, a highly touted freshman.

"Guys like Derek and Jonathan are guys we're hoping can step in and contribute," said Spencer. "Jonathan's a big guy who can run. I think he can help us this year."

Combs was voted Mr. Football in Ohio two seasons ago at nearby Grove City and saw limited action as a freshman last year, gaining 82 yards. He and Montgomery look to be in a dead heat for the backup role behind Wiley.

Wells (6-2, 220) was one of the nation's most heavily recruited backs as he gained over 1,400 yards while scoring 21 touchdowns for John Curtis High School in Louisiana.

Senior Jermon Jackson, redshirted

last year, and sophomore Jerry Westbrook also add depth at tailback.

Martin In Running At Fullback

The coaching staff is ecstatic over the addition of freshman Jamar Martin, perhaps the first true fullback at OSU since the days of Nicky Sualua. The 6-1, 235-pounder appears to be OSU's fullback of the future, but for 1998 Keller has the position locked up.

The converted tailback has gained 40 pounds since his freshman season and has learned the fullback position. Last season, his first as a starter, he gained 257 yards on the ground and caught 19 passes.

"I think I've improved my blocking," said Keller, who now weighs 238 pounds. "I'm confident I can get the job done on an isolation play and make the key block."

Unfazed by his blocking responsibilities, Keller has grown into the role, something a lot of players can't seem to adjust to.

Spencer said that's the problem right now with sophomore Sean Penny, a tailback in high school whom the coaching staff switched to fullback last season.

"He would obviously love to be a tailback, but he's a fullback in our system," Spencer said. "He hasn't accepted that yet, but I think he will and I think he can get better."

"Hey, if you want to get on the field and you're a player, you try to get on the field the best way you can. Sean Penny can run the football, there's no doubt about it. But right now we need him as a fullback."

Penny enters fall camp as the No. 2 fullback behind Keller.

While Spencer is satisfied with the effort both Keller and Penny are exerting, he said there's even more work to do.

"I would like to see the fullback position become more physical," said Spencer. "Matt Keller is doing an excellent job for us and does everything we ask even though he's not a true I-formation fullback."

"I would like him to be more physical if I had any beef. Other than that, he catches the ball well, runs the ball well and is a smart player."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE WIDE RECEIVERS

Buckeye Wide Receiving Corps: We Are Family

By MIKE WACHSMAN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When David Boston makes a catch this year, it will be the same as Reggie Germany making a catch. If Dee Miller stretches for one in the end zone, Ken-Yon Rambo did the same.

There are a lot of great players — but no individuals — in the Ohio State receiving corps this season, so many in fact that the group has been touted as the nation's best by many prognosticators.

With reliable Joe Germaine finally getting the starting job, it's not like the Buckeyes are breaking in a new quarterback. The harmony between Germaine and OSU's wideout corps will help the Buckeyes' offense immeasurably.

And it doesn't matter who makes the play, because everyone benefits.

"The receivers are just looking to be together as one," said Germany. "If someone gets down, we have to be family-oriented. If one of us makes a big play, we all celebrate. It's relying on one another. With this receiving corps, there's nothing we can't accomplish as a whole."

Receivers coach Chuck Stobart has been around a lot of good groups in his day, but he was hard-pressed to come up with another outfit that matches this one.

"I haven't been around a team that had this many good receivers," Stobart said. "We've been fortunate to have some really good ones the last few years, but you can go down and there's six guys who are pretty good and can play in a ball game."

"On the other hand, we want to make sure David and Dee are in there enough that they could go on and succeed at the next level."

If they play anywhere near the level of last season, success should be at their fingertips.

Veterans Showing The Way

Boston is The Man in this group, and after a season of 73 catches and 14 touchdowns, that title is warranted. A long strider who's faster than he appears, Boston can catch even the worst passes with ease. He'll be one of OSU's big-play performers this season, one whom the Buckeyes will try to utilize as often as possible.

"I just want to go out and make plays and help the team win," said Boston, who will also handle punt return duties. "If it means catching a lot of passes, that's fine. If it means helping the running backs, fine. We want to win all our games."

Miller hit his stride last year, much to the delight of OSU fans growing impatient with the development of the heralded Springfield, Ohio, prep star. Miller, who can stretch defenses with the best of them, averaged almost 17 yards per grab and tallied 981 yards, 11 more than Boston.

Though Miller certainly has the capability to earn All-Big Ten status, he's more concerned with the Buckeyes' running game.

"Sometimes we depended on our passing game too much last year," he said. "We'd run the ball and have no success, Stan (Jackson) would go out and Joe would



JEFF BREDA

WE'LL CATCH THE BALL — Ohio State's standout receiving corps, includes, front, left to right, Darik Warnke, Tony Locke, Dee Miller, David Boston and Kevin Griffin. Back, Chad Cacchio, Reggie Germany, Vanness Provitt, Ken-Yon Rambo and Jimmy Redmond. Coach Chuck Stobart is at right.

come in and everyone would know what we were about to do. They'd bring in the nickel defense and stop us. We need to do a better job all around, including us as receivers."

The big two make Stobart sleep a little easier when the day is done.

"Those are two very good players," he said. "They both need to be involved with what we do, but we can't rely too heavily on them. We need to show balance. But those are two great guys to have on your side."

Reliable Kevin Griffin returns, and though he caught just two passes a year ago, he's a steady force among the group. As a special teams captain, Griffin brings just the right amount of leadership and savvy. He may be used more often this season than in the past.

Junior Jimmy Redmond, who missed most of last season after suffering a broken leg bone in the opener, is back in the fold, with added weight and a determination to return to form. Junior Darik Warnke was giving great effort in practice and may find a niche.

The only bad news comes with Vanness Provitt. This prototypical possession receiver could be sidelined for the year as he suffered a dislocated hip after falling while diving for a ball on the first day of fall camp.

Young And Restless

Rambo and Germany gave a hint of what they could do a year ago, combining for eight catches and one score. Both had monster springs, and Stobart expects them to use that to catapult them to star status.

"The whole key to it is the younger guys continuing to get better," Stobart said. "We want them to build off what they did in the spring. I'm excited about them. They have great ability. The key is being patient, just like Dee had to be and David had to be and Terry (Glenn) had to be. They need to stay in the game mentally, but their time will come."

Rambo, a speedy but skinny threat who has fans salivating at his potential, wants to tap into his big-play ability this season. With more confidence and a year in the system, he believes that will happen.

"I'll be a lot looser," Rambo said. "I came in the first time seeing 90,000. I had never seen that before. You're used to 5,000 for a

high school game. I was nervous, had the jitterbugs and everything.

"But as the season went on I started getting used to it. I might have a few butterflies this year, but they'll go away in the first quarter."

Germany, also a sophomore, was the hit of the spring, routinely toasting defensive backs and catching the winning TD in the Spring Game. Disciplined as a route runner, Germany could be ready to explode on the scene. But that's not his main concern.

"If I can contribute to us winning, I'll be happy," he said. "I'm not looking for numbers. I'm looking for us to win all our games."

Timing Is Everything

With the Buckeyes having the luxury of a returning quarterback — though Germaine technically wasn't a starter, he knows the system backward and forward — things should go smoothly with the air attack.

Early in practice, the passing game was humming with uncanny precision, as nearly every player made at least one great grab. It may just turn out that the Buckeyes have one of the most lethal passing games in the Big Ten.

"(Having Joe) will help everyone on the offensive end," Boston said. "You can develop a lot better rhythm having one quarterback."

Miller feels it's already evident. "We've got our timing down already," Miller said. "We've been together for a few years now. We should be less predictable this time around. We all should benefit from that."

Stobart said the Buckeyes won't lock in to having receivers line up at the same position each play. Defenses won't be able to get comfortable, allowing for more big strikes.

OSU will be tested right out of the blocks by West Virginia, and to a man the Buckeye receivers like that. They want to know where they stand right away.

Stobart knows his troops will have to be in midseason form very early.

"If we're going to achieve the goals we have as a football team, that first game will go a long way in determining that," Stobart said. "We're playing a ranked team on their field and they're shooting for the same goals we are. We don't have time to ease into the schedule."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE TIGHT ENDS

TEs Need To Increase Production, Cooper Says

By JEFF BREHM

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

There are pillars in front of Greek buildings that aren't as big as some of this year's Ohio State tight ends. But sheer size isn't enough to accomplish everything coach John Cooper wants from the position this season.

Even though John Lumpkin and Steve Wisniewski combined for 29 catches for 495 yards and five touchdowns, Cooper was pretty blunt in his remarks about the tight ends.

"We've got to get more production out of our tight ends," Cooper said. "We didn't get anything out of Wisniewski this spring (due to an injured lower back). Lumpkin missed all of our winter conditioning drills while playing basketball, and that doesn't help. And Kevin Houser missed about half of spring (with a right wrist fracture).

"Tight end has got to become a more productive position for us in terms of blocking and catching the football."

They don't sound like comments made with a smile by the coach of the top-ranked team in the nation. But tight ends coach Bill Conley says his players have more than enough talent and experience to overcome the injuries and increase productivity.

"It seems like we're coming out of the injuries OK," Conley said. "If we can bounce back from those things, I think the experience factor will be very important for us because I know we want to emphasize the tight end more in our offense this year."

"I thought last year we did a good job getting the ball to our tight ends and using multiple formations with the tight ends. I see us doing pretty much the same things this year."

Taking His Lumps

Conley said the tight ends as a unit are deeper, better balanced and more experienced than last fall. One reason is that fifth-year senior John Lumpkin (6-8, 260) still is at the top of the list.

Lumpkin, who has played parts of three seasons with the OSU basketball team,

started his football coming-out party in his sophomore season, when he played in all 12 games and caught a dozen passes for 159 yards, a 13.3-yards-per-catch average. Last fall he continued to improve, snaring 17 passes for 320 yards and three touchdowns, including a spectacular juggling 50-yard TD catch late in the Sugar Bowl.

As a result, Lumpkin starts his final season as a third-team All-American according to Bob Griese's College Football Yearbook. He was rated the No. 4 tight end in the nation and a second-team All-Big Ten pick by Lindy's, and The Sporting News rated him No. 3 in the country.

"The pros have been watching film on John for a couple of years," Conley said. "He's got people talking about him. We expect John to play his best football this year, and we expect great leadership from him on the field. The kids look up to him and respect him."

"He has lots of athletic talent. He can run, he can block and he can catch. He's done a good job in the off-season fine-tuning his game, getting a little bit stronger and quicker and catching the ball better."

Lumpkin said he's comfortable wearing the mantle of the leader, but he's not the boot-in-the-pants kind.

"Being around longer and being able to tell the guys what to expect is a role I should expect, being the senior in the group," he said. "But a leader has to be a listener, too; I can't just go around telling guys, 'Come on, we've got to do this.' I like to lead by example. But I'm not afraid to tell somebody to pick it up if they need to."

Backups Also Talented

Conley welcomes the return of Wisniewski (6-5, 265) from his lower back surgery. Wisniewski didn't let a sore back interfere with his studies last season, earning Academic All-Big Ten honors and his third OSU scholar-athlete award.

Wisniewski saw action in all 13 games last season, pulling in 12 catches for 175 yards (a 14.6 average) and two TDs.

The back injury has not limited Wisniewski during fall camp.

"He has all kinds of talent," Conley said. "He's really a good blocker and can catch



STEVE HELMAGEN

LUMP IN THE HOUSE — Tight end John Lumpkin (85) should have a chance to shine for the Buckeyes this year after having limited involvement in the offense a year ago. He and Kevin Houser (87) are just part of a deep tight end corps.

the ball. He did a good job in the weight room after the operation in getting his strength back."

Wisniewski hasn't resisted the chance to test his back during camp.

"My back is still a little bit sore, still recovering a little bit, but I don't have sharp pain like I did before the surgery, so I think it was successful," he said.

Another junior OSU scholar-athlete and member of the Academic All-Big Ten team is Houser (6-3, 250). He does double duty for the Buckeyes, serving as both a tight end and the long snapper. A broken wrist suffered late in spring drills could sideline him in both spots, however.

"Kevin plays a very important role on this football team, and he was having a great spring. In fact, if I had to pick out the one tight end who was having the best spring, he would have been it," Conley said. "It's going to be important for us for him to perform both in two-tight end situations and in handling the long snapping."

Freshman Darnell Sanders (6-6, 265) sat out last fall to earn a passing entrance exam score. He enrolled in the winter and went through spring football. Sanders

played quarterback and defensive back in high school, but he's already making good impressions at his new position.

"He's a young talent that is still growing into his body," Conley said. "He has all kinds of athletic ability. We'll work hard on his running and catching. He's a guy we expect to get better every week and we also expect him to play some this year."

Conley also has three walk-on players in his unit, including redshirt freshman Marvin Payne, Brian May and Frank Conrad.

Doing The Dirty Work

Wisniewski just smiled when asked if the tight ends envy all the adulation for OSU's flashier wide receivers.

"We caught quite a few balls last year and part of that is because our wideouts got so much attention," he said. "By about the middle of the season, it really started opening up some stuff for us because defenses were concentrating on Dee (Miller) and David (Boston)."

"We're not a real flashy group. We block and we try to catch the ball when it's thrown to us. If we do our job, the rest of the team can do theirs and we win games."



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COVER STORY: THE YEAR OF THE BUCKEYE

Buckeyes Want To Hang On To No. 1 Ranking

Continued From Page 1

working.

"How do you approach it? We're shooting for No. 1. We talk about it. I'm one of those guys who believes in setting your goals high. We talk to the players about trying to be the best.

"But nothing has changed. Just because we're No. 1, people aren't suddenly going to be up for us. I don't know if we've ever caught anybody on an off day when we played them."

Players Like Top Spot

The rankings and the publicity are all fine, but a number of Buckeye players believe that will have little impact on their season.

"That's not going to affect us one way or the other, I think," said Joe Germaine, who will take over as the starter at quarterback after sharing duties with Stanley Jackson the last two years.

"It's something we accept, and we're happy about it. But we know we're going to have to earn everything we get. Nothing's going to be given to us, so we're pretty humble at the same time."

Beginning Sept. 5 at 11th-ranked West Virginia, the Buckeyes know they will be the hunted.

"Everybody's coming for you, but at the same time I like it," Rob Murphy said. "I like playing under pressure. I like going out every week and having everyone take their best shot at you."

Senior flanker Dee Miller, who joins split end David Boston in forming one of the nation's top receiving tandems, has noticed some extra emphasis on this year.

"Here at Ohio State you could be ranked 15th in the preseason and there will still be a lot of fan support," Miller said. "Now you're No. 1 and everybody wants to know what you have to say and how you're going to do every Saturday."

"It's going to be a lot of pressure, but that's something you have to get used to at Ohio State."

But, as the old adage goes, you're either getting better or you're getting worse — you never stay the same.

"It's kind of a blessing, but when you start out No. 1 the only way you can go is down, so you really have to be on your toes," said offensive tackle Brooks Burris.

One key to this year's success will be leadership. But with so many returning starters, Miller said that should not be a problem.

"I have to step up," Miller said. "Joe Germaine has stepped up. Damon

Charting The 1998 Buckeyes

• **Coach:** John Cooper (11th year at OSU, 86-32-4; 22nd year overall, 168-72-6).

• **1997 Record:** 10-3 (lost to Florida State in Sugar Bowl); **Big Ten:** 6-2/2nd (tie).

• **Key Losses:** Pepe Pearson, TB; Eric Gohistin, OT; Stanley Jackson, QB; Winfield Garnett, DT; Jimmie Bell, NG; Kevin Johnson, BLB.

• **Starters Returning: Offense (8):** Tyson Walter, LT, 6-5, 305, So.; Rob Murphy, LG, 6-5, 300, Jr.; Kurt Murphy, C, 6-4, 290, Jr.; Ben Gilbert, RG, 6-5, 295, Jr.; John Lumpkin, TE, 6-8, 260, Sr.; David Boston, SE, 6-3, 215, Jr.; Dee Miller, FL, 6-1, 200, Sr.; Matt Keller, FB, 6-0, 238, Jr. **Defense (9):** Rodney Bailey, DE, 6-3, 255, So.; Joe Brown, NG, 6-6, 285, So.; Matt LaVrar, DE, 6-3, 240, Jr.; Andy Katzenmoyer, MLB, 6-4, 255, Jr.; Jerry Rudzinski, WLB, 6-2, 225, Sr.; Antoine Winfield, CB, 5-9, 180, Sr.; Gary Berry, FS, 6-0, 195, Jr.; Damon Moore, SS, 5-11, 200, Sr.; Ahmed Plummer, CB, 6-0, 190, Jr. **Kickers (2):** Dan Stultz, K, 6-0, 195, So.; Brent Bartholomew, P, 6-2, 210, Sr.

• **Other Key Returnees:** Joe Germaine, QB; Brooks Burris, RT; John Lumpkin, TE; Michael Wiley, TB; Joe Montgomery, TB; Derek Combs, TB; Reggie Germany, SE; Ken-Yon Rambo, FL; Tam Hopkins, RG; Henry Fleming, RT; Clinton Wayne, DT; Na'il Diggs, BLB; Brent Johnson, DE; Courtland Bullard, BLB; Central McClellion, SS; Percy King, FS.

• **Key Newcomers:** Mike Collins, DT; Paris Long, DT (RS); James Cotton, DE (JUCO); Steve Bellisari, QB; Nate Clements, CB; Jamar Martin, FB; Austin Moherman, QB (RS); Jason Ott, LB (RS); Kenny Peterson, DE; Ryan Pickett, DE; Darnell Sanders, TE; Jonathan Wells, RB.

• **Schedule:** See Ohio State Insider, page 4.

Moore, John Lumpkin, we have a number of leaders who have stepped up. People keep questioning our leaders, but we're going to be all right.

"We have a lot of guys who speak up vocally and a lot of guys who lead by example."

Is This Team Coop's Best?

Cooper was asked whether he feels this is his best OSU team.

"The team two years ago, defensively, seven of those guys have made NFL rosters. You knew they were going to be good on defense," he said.

"Can this team be that good? I don't know that or not. I think our skilled people are good. Our wide receivers are good, our quarterback will be real good, our running backs are not — we don't have a Robert Smith or Raymond (Harris) or Eddie (George). But I think collectively those guys will be OK."

Cooper noted how OSU's offensive line needs major improvement over last year.

"Depth was a factor in the offensive line, big time," he said. "When we went to New Orleans for the Sugar Bowl, we ran the first day we were there. I looked over to the sideline and Tyson Walter, Ben Gilbert, Rob Murphy and Eric Gohistin were all on the sideline standing there. Tam Hopkins wasn't with us."

"We had nobody else to play, and we played about like that. The offensive line failed to show up against Florida

State."

Cooper shared his No. 1 concern with this year's team.

"The No. 1 thing we have to do, we have to be a more physical football team than we were last year," he said. "We couldn't slow Penn State down last year. Florida State manhandled us up front. We've got to be more physical on both sides of the ball than we were last year."

"It's been a long time since we've had a big, strong, physical fullback, and that has hurt us a little bit. I can't tell you how many times we had third-and-short or fourth-and-short and don't get it."

"I like Matt Keller, I like Sean Penny, but we do not have the 260-pound fullback we've had in past years."

"We've got to be able to run the football in running situations and be successful. If it's third-and-short or fourth-and-short, you've got to be able to run off tackle and get the first down. Last year we didn't do that."

Miller pinpointed some of the team's problems from last year, when the Buckeyes also dropped narrow decisions in Big Ten showdowns with Penn State and Michigan.

"We have to get on the same page. A couple of losses last year, we weren't on the same page," he said. "We have to come in and do it week in and week out."

"Everybody's coming for you, but at the same time I like it. I like playing under pressure. I like going out every week and having everyone take their best shot at you."

• Rob Murphy,
OSU offensive guard

"Sometimes our offense got predictable last year with Stan and Joe alternating. Joe is going to be the No. 1 man this year. This is his job. We should benefit from having one person in it for the whole game."

Summing Up

When asked if he was on top of the world because of the lofty ranking, Cooper said, "I can't have any more bounce. I'm feeling as good as I've felt in 10 or 15 years. I wanted to come in at 185, my playing weight, and I came in at 184."

"I wake up every day with a smile on my face. Life's too short to be unhappy."

But will being No. 1 change things dramatically for the Buckeyes?

"You can't have any more pressure than we've had," Cooper said. "At Ohio State, everybody expects you to win every game you play, so nothing has changed."

While some have already pointed to the team's high ranking and the season-ending showdown with Michigan Nov. 21, Cooper and his staff are working hard to keep the team focused on the task at hand — beginning with West Virginia.

"You're fooling yourself if you think (the players are) not looking at that (Michigan and the rankings)," Cooper said. "But we'll talk to them about it. You better get ready for West Virginia. Give me great effort in practice. Give us the great work ethic we're used to having."

"We need to keep our eye on the bull's-eye, probably more than in the past. Concentrate on West Virginia, then Toledo and Missouri, and then the conference will take care of itself."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE OFFENSIVE LINE

Linemen Want To Carry Their Weight In '98

By JEFF RAPP

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

A new collection of offensive linemen were introduced to OSU fans last season, but none of them felt like taking a bow at the end of the season, when the offense came to a screeching halt in losses to Michigan and Florida State.

This year it's common knowledge that the trenchmen need to improve across the board, especially with the No. 1 moniker stuck on OSU's helmets right next to the Buckeye leaves.

With so much at stake and so much improvement to be made up front, it's no surprise that John Cooper fielded offensive line questions almost instantly at the team's picture day on Aug. 14.

"I hope I see some good signs there," said the OSU head coach. "All you have to do is go back to the Florida State game — we didn't block anybody. I hope they're better than they were the last game I saw them play."

"We expect to have better production out of the offensive line. We don't have any excuses this year. We should have more competition and we ought to have more depth on the offensive line than we've had around here in a long time."

With a projected starting unit that includes three players just beginning their third year in the program, the Buckeyes still have time to develop an enviable front line.

But offensive coordinator Mike Jacobs said the time is now.

"To say they're inexperienced this year would be a cop-out," Jacobs said. "Most of those guys have started 12 or 13 games for the Buckeyes and we expect them to be good linemen in our tradition."

Walter Entrenched At Left Tackle

Certainly considered to be on his way to a satisfying career, left tackle Tyson Walter improved as the season wore on in 1997, even though he had to protect the blind sides of two completely different quarterbacks in Stanley Jackson and Joe Germaine. Jackson is gone now, and the

pocket-prone Germaine is now the franchise.

That means Walter will have to be on his toes more than ever.

"I don't get as much help from the interior linemen as they do with each other, but it's no big deal," said Walter, a redshirt sophomore from Bainbridge, Ohio. "You get used to it."

Walter likes what he's seen from the line in drills and believes last year's experiences — the good and the eye-opening — will greatly serve OSU in '98.

"From that aspect it's a much more relaxed camp. Last year I was still nervous about starting and whatnot," said Walter, who started all 13 games last year after the early departure of Outland Trophy winner Orlando Pace.

"In my mind I'm locked down, and I've got it as long as I stay here. But I'm not going to be complacent by any stretch of the imagination."

Rob Murphy Takes Anchor At LG

Every good line needs an anchor, and the Buckeyes have one in All-American left guard Rob Murphy.

"I think it's real important to have that," said Murphy, a redshirt junior from Cincinnati. "When I started, I played right next to Orlando and he was my crutch. These guys all have a year under their belt, though, so it's not like I have to be as much of a crutch as Orlando was for me. But I've got the experience and I want to lead up there."

Murphy is as stoked as anyone to begin the year after leaving the Sugar Bowl carpet in intense pain with yet another knee injury. This fall, he has battled back problems, but he should be ready to lead OSU to battle against West Virginia.

"I just get emotional talking about it because I sat out spring and that killed me," said Murphy, who has 23 career starts under his belt. "I love practice, I love being over there, I love watching film. I just can't wait to get that first play. I'm going to be an emotional wreck come Sept. 5 because there's going to be a lot of pent-up frustration coming out that night."



STEVE HELWAGEN

TALKING TRENCH WARFARE — Offensive coordinator Mike Jacobs (right, in white shirt) instructs the Ohio State offensive line in some of the finer points of blocking. Interested parties are Ben Gilbert (64), Ben Pulfer (71), Brooks Burris (67) and Tyson Walter (putting on helmet at far right).

Kurt Murphy Nabs Center Spot

Kurt Murphy is not related to Rob, but he brings the same physical style and stable approach to practice. He could be key to popping OSU backs for quick bursts up the middle with his strong run blocking from the center spot, where he started the last half of the '97 season.

"You never know what's going to happen, but obviously I'd like to be the starter," said Murphy, a local product of DeSales High School in his junior year of eligibility. "You know Coach Jacobs is going to be playing the best five players."

But Murphy has the look of a mainstay at center, especially if he continues to make the proper checks at the line of scrimmage.

"This game is so complex," he said. "You never know everything. Once you think you know everything, that's when you don't know anything."

Gilbert Winning Fight At RG

A true junior like his next-door linemate Kurt Murphy, Ben Gilbert appears to be embroiled in the toughest competition at right guard. But Gilbert is taking the practice field with the first team, intent on helping the Buckeye front jell as a group.

"I think we function well as a unit, which is needed, because without it you're not going to play well," said the likable Lancaster, Ohio, native.

"I think it comes through repetition, but in practice and stuff like that you're around the same people all the time. You've got to be able to talk and be friends to some degree. We've got people who watch film together and hang out together, and it's real evident we get along well enough."

Burris Manning RT — For Now

Penciled in at right tackle, Logan product Brooks Burris gives OSU an All-Ohio starting five. He also brings a wealth of experience to the group with 32 games played and lots of time logged at both guard and tackle.

"I'm looking forward to moving around this year," said Burris, a 6-7, 290-pounder. "It's good for the team and gives us an extra advantage. If we have to shuffle things, I can go somewhere else instead of us sticking in a young freshman."

The coaches insist Burris can handle the RT chores, but he would be an ideal supersub if someone else should emerge. But no matter his role, Burris knows he needs to help make the Buckeye line an

imposing unit.

"We haven't played any games yet, so I can understand why the fans are a little concerned. But I'm not worried about it. In fact, I'm looking forward to it," he said.

The Reserves

Even with a determined group of starters, the Buckeyes will be looking to filter in players throughout the season. And the promising collection of reserves shrank during the off-season as Jim Massey and Jefferson Kelley were lost to injury. Meanwhile, sophomore Tam Hopkins was still working his way back from a broken ankle he suffered in the spring (see story on page 27) when camp opened.

Another talented soph, Henry Fleming, was held out of the first part of fall camp with a viral infection, and Drew Elford went down early with a severe ankle sprain.

"That's a concern of ours when you lose players before you even tee it up, so to speak, and start hitting," Jacobs said. "In the coming weeks we're going to pound each other pretty good to get ready for the physicalness of the season, and in order to play Buckeye football, we need those big guys up front."

Kelley's once promising career is done due to a damaged shoulder (see Ohio State Insider on page 4), and Massey is out of the picture this season because of a herniated disk in his lower back.

"It wasn't a very pleasing thing to hear," said Walter, who has Massey listed behind him at left tackle. "You never want to hear about anyone getting hurt in any sort of way. Jim provided a lot of our much-needed depth, and unfortunately he's not going to be around. It's going to make things more difficult."

But all is not lost, especially if Hopkins and Fleming reach their form and Elford and Mike Gurr make the same type of strides they showed in the spring. With a good fall, Eric Smith has a chance to work in at tackle.

"I think it's a lot better than last year because we had a real depth problem last year," Gilbert said. "We had maybe one or two guys ready to come off the bench, and that's not good for the team."

If nothing else, a strong showing by some of the listed backups like Hopkins could make for some fierce practices.

"There's going to be a lot of drama this camp," Rob Murphy said. "People are going to be moving in and out whether they like it or not. Overall, it's good for us."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE DEFENSIVE LINE

Defensive Linemen Expect To Shuffle In '98

By JEFF BREHM
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When it comes to plotting Ohio State's 1998 defensive line strategy, you might say the Buckeyes' 31-14 loss to Florida State in the Sugar Bowl was a blessing in disguise.

OK, extremely well-disguised, but it did teach the OSU coaching staff some valuable lessons. Perhaps the most useful was the frequent rotation of fresh bodies into the FSU defensive line, which limited Ohio State quarterbacks to 16-for-36 passing while tallying four sacks and forcing three interceptions.

With this year's defensive line loaded with talent but lacking in returning starters, defensive tackles coach Jim Heacock and defensive ends coach Shawn Simms have even more reason to put the lessons learned in New Orleans to use.

"We're going to play the same defense, but with more people," Simms said. "Instead of two or three, we'll play four or five. We're looking for the maximum effort on every play, not to have a guy out there even though he's tired but he has to be out there. We shouldn't have that."

"We saw that Florida State could do it because they had two and three backups that could do it. We feel, coming out of the spring, that we've increased our backups. And hopefully some of the new guys coming in can help us, too."

The End Of The Line

Simms said his defensive ends should be better than last year, if only because everyone is back and has a year more of experience under their pads.

"When you add (junior college transfer) James Cotton to that picture and our two incoming freshmen, I'm excited," Simms said. "I know we're going to be a lot stronger and have a lot more depth."

"I don't know if we have a leader in



STEVE HELWAGEN

THE FUTURE IS NOW — Ohio State freshmen Kenny Peterson (97) and Julius Yeast await their turn during a recent practice session. Both have a chance to make a mark as rookies, much the way Rodney Bailey (94) did a year ago.

the group yet, and we still haven't decided who the starters are going to be. Rodney Bailey was a true freshman last year, but if I had to say who the guys looked up to, it would be the guys who played last year — Rodney and Matt LaVrar."

A sophomore from Cleveland, Bailey (6-3, 255) is listed at the top of the pre-season defensive depth chart. As OSU's only true freshman regular last fall, he played in all 13 games and started in the final five contests. He tallied nine tackles against Michigan and finished the season with three sacks.

"Rodney had a good spring," Simms said. "He's picked up more weight, he's moving better than he was last year, and he's stronger than he was last year. I'm expecting a lot out of Rodney Bailey."

Bailey said the platoon system suits him fine.

"I like to play a lot, and when I'm in there I want to make plays," he said. "But this is a seasoned group, and the rotation means we can all play to the best of our ability and never let down."

Then there's the newcomer who brings an almost immediate smile to Simms' face. Cotton (6-4, 245) transferred from Community College of San Francisco to OSU last winter quarter and made an almost immediate splash in spring drills. He's now projected to start opposite Bailey on the pre-season depth chart.

"James was a surprise and a delight from the spring," Simms said. "He got less than a 24-hour notice before our scrimmage that he was being moved from linebacker to defensive end, and in that game we saw that James Cotton has the ability to make big plays. He made about eight tackles and intercepted or knocked down a pass."

"I think all the defensive coaches were looking at each other while he was on the field and thinking, 'Hey, we found the right guy.' He's definitely going to give us a threat."

Cotton said he has no regrets about leaving linebacking behind, even though that's where he earned JUCO All-American honors last season after

racking up 100 tackles and eight sacks. "I feel real good about it. I feel I can make a positive contribution to the team there," he said. "From the first snap of the ball, I felt like this was where I belonged."

"I had a little experience in high school playing a stand-up defensive lineman coming off the corner. I just treat it like I'm blitzing every down. It was an adjustment mentally to always be after the quarterback, and I found that I really enjoyed it."

An Academic All-Big Ten and OSU scholar-athlete, junior Matt LaVrar (6-3, 240) played in all 13 games and started in 11 at the "Leo," or strong-side defensive end spot last fall. Moved from outside linebacker to end in the spring of 1997, LaVrar responded with 25 tackles and a sack last season.

"Matt LaVrar was probably the steadiest guy and the most productive guy we had against the run a year ago," Simms said. "He's a smart football player. We look for Matt to improve on some things, but you can't ask Matt to put out any more effort than he already does."

Sophomore Brent Johnson (6-4, 265) from Kingston, Ontario, rounds out the four players on the season's first depth chart.

"Brent Johnson was the most improved player I had in the spring. He made some plays that I looked at and said, 'Boy, that's good to see,'" Simms said.

"I feel really good about him — he got bigger, he got faster, he got stronger. As long as he continues what he's doing, with his great attitude and his full-go all the time, he'll play a lot for us."

Simms said he hopes fifth-year senior Jeff Wilson (6-4, 255), junior Tony Eisenhard (6-7, 265) and at least one of the Buckeyes' newcomers — either Kenny Peterson (6-4, 250) or Julius Yeast (6-5, 280) — also will earn spots in the new DE rotation.

"You need at least four to do this right. If you have more, it's even better," he said. "It's hard to predict how an incoming freshman will do, but Kenny Peterson certainly has the tools to play the game."

"The same for Julius Yeast. In high school he showed some tremendous ability coming off the end."

Meeting In The Middle

Heacock said his linemen, too, are a stronger unit than a year ago, but his rotation will be a lot larger.

"Physically we've got more depth. Basically we lost of couple of real good players, and what we have now are a lot of good young guys with a lot of talent but who are lacking a little in experience," he said.

"We're expecting that we're going to play eight to 12 players on the defensive line every game. We're going to do the best we can across that front to get the maximum effort on every play. If someone's tired, we'll get somebody else in there."

The fact that the Buckeyes have a young defensive line is apparent in the pre-season depth chart, which lists a pair of redshirt sophomores as likely starters. One of them is Clinton Wayne (6-3, 275), who started four games at end and saw action in eight others. The highlight of his 1997 season came against Indiana, where he batted up a pass at the line of scrimmage, caught the ball and ran it back 38 yards for a touchdown.

"Clinton started to come on at the bowl game a little and had a good spring," Heacock said. "I think he's real focused now. He'll get the opportunity this year and he's ready to make a run at it."

The other likely starter is Joe Brown, who played in every game last fall and started in five. He finished the season with 23 tackles and a sack.

"Joe had a great off-season," Heacock said. "He has gotten a lot stronger, a lot bigger and definitely is a lot faster."

Brown said he was impressed by the FSU line he saw in the Sugar Bowl and said he thinks the Buckeyes can play as well.

"I learned a lot watching them, the way they flew around and were real active," he said. "I think the rotation this year will let us do that by keeping everybody fresh."

Mike Collins (6-3, 290) is considered a true freshman, but he joined OSU in the spring after spending part of a year at Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy. He also was impressive in the spring.

"Mike is a tough kid, maybe the most physical of the group," Heacock said. "I think he'll be a big help for us in there."

Hopes were high that redshirt freshman Paris Long (6-6, 320) would also make an impact, but he suffered a neck sprain on the first day of fall camp and it's unclear when he may return.

Two other true freshmen — Ryan Pickett (6-3, 290) and David Thompson (6-5, 280) — also have shown potential this fall.

"They look like they're going to be right in the mix. Physically they're very similar to the other guys we have in there," Heacock said.

Rounding out the roster are junior Randy Homa (6-2, 285), who bench presses 475 pounds, and redshirt freshman Heath Queen (6-5, 275), who missed most of last year due to injury. Another line reserve, redshirt freshman Ben Pulfer, was moved over to the offensive line.

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE LINEBACKERS

Linebackers Preparing For Every Contingency

By MARK PODOLSKI
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Chris Kirk and Jason Ott are not exactly household names on the Ohio State defense.

Not yet. Of course, that depends on the status of All-American linebacker Andy Katzenmoyer. Backups Kirk and Ott have taken the majority of reps at middle linebacker during preseason drills as last year's Butkus Award winner takes care of business in the classroom to become academically eligible in the fall.

That's the most pressing issue for defensive coordinator Fred Pagac entering the 1998 campaign. With Katzenmoyer, OSU's linebacking unit is formidable. Without him, it remains solid.

Senior Jerry Rudzinski returns at one outside position, while sophomore Na'il Diggs enters fall camp as the other starter on the outside.

"The academic situation will take care of itself," said Rudzinski. "We haven't had any type of conversation

about it. I'm planning on the same guys being on the field this year."

So is Katzenmoyer. He vows he'll do well enough in his three summer school classes to boost his grade-point average to a qualifying status of 2.0 or better.

"It's a main concern for Buckeye fans, but I'm going to take care of business and be out there on Sept. 5," said Katzenmoyer.

Katzenmoyer's totals in two seasons — 182 tackles, 14 sacks and 36 tackles-for-loss — would be hard to replace. Kirk, a junior, has 26 tackles in his career, while Ott was redshirted last season.

"If you take me out, Chris is a solid replacement," Katzenmoyer said. "He's my exact identical. We came from the same high school (Westerville South), so of course we have the same fundamentals. He just has No. 44 instead of 45."

Pagac, who also serves as linebackers coach, is concerned over the practice Katzenmoyer will miss but not his replacements.

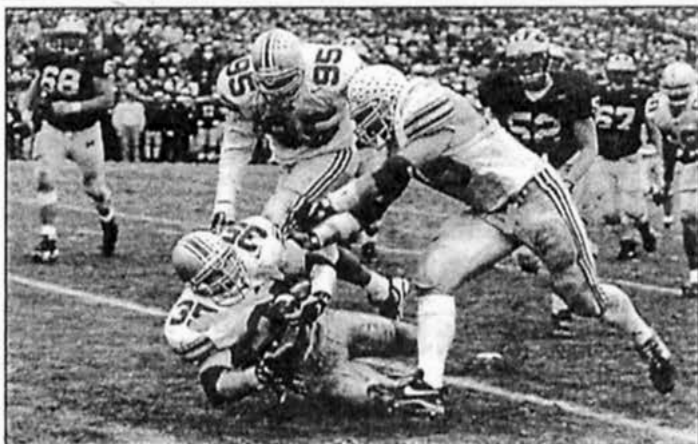
"Chris Kirk will practice with the No. 1 unit," Pagac said. "Jerry (Rudzinski) at times will. Jason Ott will be working at the inside."

If Katzenmoyer doesn't make the grade, it would cripple an already thin position. With Katzenmoyer, OSU has just seven linebackers on its roster.

"We're thin at linebacker, so everyone has to learn all the positions anyway," said Pagac. "We've got seven players for three spots and they all have to be pretty interchangeable."

And ready. The youth and inexperience of the Buckeyes' defensive line will force the three linebackers to be on the top of their game. Pagac is also counting on the defensive front to apply pressure and thus allow the linebackers to roam the field.

"I'm not sure if offenses will allow us to do what we did two years ago," said



JEFF BRIDGMAN

BACKING IT UP — Linebackers Jerry Rudzinski (35) and Andy Katzenmoyer (right) are mainstays on the Ohio State defense. Aided by Na'il Diggs and a host of young talent, the linebacking corps could be one of the team's most solid units this year.

Pagac, referring to when the linebackers blitzed early and often. "We found that out last year. I think there will be different times when we've got to back off. The game keeps changing. If a quarterback takes a three-step drop, you can blitz all you want but you're not going to get to him."

Regardless, Katzenmoyer is hoping his sack total increases. After registering 12 as a freshman, his total dipped to just two last season.

"I hope I blitz a lot this year just like my freshman year," he said. "I hope they let me go and do my thing."

To allow himself to do "his thing," Katzenmoyer has shed about 20 pounds and will play at about 240-245 pounds. It's a measure Katzenmoyer believes will help considerably.

"I played about 260-265 last year, which isn't a bad weight for me because I can carry it, but I think I'm better lighter," he said.

Going Outside

Rudzinski, who finished fifth on the team with 65 tackles including four sacks, will undoubtedly be a better player with a year's experience as a starter under his belt. While Katzenmoyer shed a few pounds, Rudzinski spent the off-season bulking up.

"I think we'll be a physical unit," Rudzinski said. "I think I'm a stronger player this year. Coach Pagac won't play someone who won't stick his nose in there. I think knowing my X's and O's and knowing my technique will allow me to let it loose on the field and play physical football."

Diggs was a highly touted freshman out of Dorsey High School in Los

Angeles two seasons ago and didn't disappoint last season.

Despite starting just two games last season, the 6-4, 235-pounder led the team with six sacks. He also had eight tackles for loss. He's the probable replacement for the graduated Kevin Johnson.

"We expect big things out of Na'il," said Rudzinski. "He's such a physical talent with his size, speed and strength. If he's got the mental side of his game going, he should have a great year."

Like his teammates, Rudzinski is hopeful of the same results OSU planted on its opponents when it blitzed, blitzed and blitzed. Last season, when graduation forced the play of several newcomers, including Rudzinski himself, the results were mixed.

"We've had the same scheme all along with Coach Pagac," he said. "The only difference is that we'll have some veterans out there running our blitzes and our packages. If people know where they're going, they can be more aggressive."

Also Ready

Besides Kirk and Ott, a highly touted prep star from Cincinnati two years ago, the Buckeyes are also grooming a pair of youngsters on the outside.

Sophomore Courtland Bullard (6-3, 220) could back up either Rudzinski or Diggs. He played in all 13 games, primarily as a special-teamer, and he logged 11 tackles.

Redshirt freshman Tim Cheatwood (6-4, 215) spent last season and the spring at safety but moved to linebacker this fall. He is a rangy athlete who has picked up his new position quickly during camp.



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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PREVIEW: THE DEFENSIVE BACKS

DB Situation Rectified In A Season's Time

By RICH LEONARDO

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

What a difference a year makes.

Last year at this time, the single most perplexing dilemma facing the OSU coaching staff was how in the world would or could it possibly restock a secondary that lost Shawn Springs, Ty Howard and Rob Kelly to the NFL?

Fast forwarding to the present finds the current OSU secondary ranked as the top group of defensive backs in the nation, according to several preseason college football publications.

"All the publicity about our secondary being the best in the country only serves to make us work even harder," OSU senior All-American cornerback Antoine Winfield said. "I feel we are the best secondary in college football as we're a veteran group, we're talented and we know what we have to do to be No. 1."

Joining the 5-9, 180-pound Winfield in OSU's secondary are junior free safety Gary Berry (6-0, 195), senior strong safety Damon Moore (5-11, 200) and junior cornerback Ahmed Plummer (6-0, 190).

"Obviously I'm anticipating great things with having all four starters back from last season, along with Central McClellion, who was a very solid fifth defensive back in the past and only seems to get better with time," OSU defensive backs coach Jon Tenuta said.

With Moore again on shaky ground academically, McClellion (5-11, 190) has been practicing primarily at safety. The senior

could also shift to cornerback if necessary.

Junior Percy King (6-4, 210) enjoyed a big spring and is bidding his time behind Berry at free safety. Redshirt freshman Greg Simpson (6-1, 205) is another option at safety.

Sophomores Rolland Steele (5-11, 170) and David Mitchell (6-1, 195) are backing up Winfield and Plummer at the corners. Senior Ashanti Webb (5-11, 185) is also vying for time there.

"Now we need a few of our other young players who've been in the system for a while to step up and show that they're ready to contribute," Tenuta said. "But if they're not up to the task, we've got four new freshmen who look like pretty good players."

The four true freshmen Tenuta referred to are corners Nate Clements and Derek Ross and safeties Willie "Cie" Grant and Donnie Nickey. Clements, in particular, could be nudging his way into the two-deep.

"All four of our freshman defensive backs are very athletic, they're fast learners, and despite the fact that they're obviously pressing themselves to be impressive, they're hanging in there just fine," Tenuta said. "The older players help take care of the rookies, so they'll show them the ropes and help them along as the season progresses."

Starters Solid

As last season progressed, it became obvious that the concerns surrounding the secondary at the start of fall practice were unnecessary, as rock-solid performances abounded.



STEVE HELWAGEN

WE'VE GOT IT COVERED — The Buckeyes are blessed with not one but two outstanding cover corners, something that's necessary in this day and age. Antoine Winfield (11) and Ahmed Plummer share a light moment at a recent practice.

Winfield, named to several All-American teams, won consensus All-Big Ten honors while totaling a team-leading 100 tackles, including 82 solos, three sacks, 12 passes broken up and two interceptions.

Moore, despite enduring summer school difficulties, a badly sprained ankle and the unfortunate death of his father during the season, still managed to earn All-Big Ten honors, totaling 58 tackles, one sack and two interceptions.

Plummer, a three-time OSU scholar-athlete and Academic All-Big Ten honoree, started all 13 games last year totaling 42 tackles, six passes broken up and five interceptions. He returned one interception 83 yards for a touchdown (against Illinois), and his pick against Florida State in the Sugar Bowl prevented a sure touchdown.

Berry started all 13 games last year and tied Plummer for the team lead with five interceptions while also setting a new school record with 166 interception return yards. Berry finished the season with seven passes broken up, 48 tackles and one sack.

"There's no pressure being considered the top secondary, or the top team for that matter, but rather I view it as a great opportunity to go out there and prove that we are indeed the best," Moore said.

"Two years ago when we had Shawn Springs, Ty Howard and Rob Kelly in the secondary, we were tops in the Big Ten, and now this year we want to go out and establish ourselves early as a strong point of our defense and let opposing teams know that passing successfully against the Buckeyes will be a very tough chore."

Going from being viewed as question marks to being the best in the country seems like quite a leap, but Tenuta has his own theory on why the OSU secondary is now so revered.

"It's superior coaching, plain and simple," Tenuta said jokingly. "No, really, they're all good kids, they've learned our system, they're gifted athletically, they know what's expected of them, and they all strive to be the very best."

"Personally, I don't read all the prognostications about who's the best at this and that because I know if our guys produce out on the field the way I know they can and the way they know they can, then all four of

them will have stellar seasons and their success and hard work will be recognized by everyone," he added.

Despite all the positive press that has recently surrounded the Buckeye secondary, they're more than aware that it's nothing more than ink on paper.

"Our being viewed as the top secondary in the country is nothing but hype right now as we need to go out and prove our abilities on the field and let our performances speak for themselves," Plummer said.

"I hope teams try to throw more in my direction because I love the action and I thrive on the challenges that every game presents. The more teams throw or even run in my direction, the more opportunities I'll have to contribute big plays."

Last year big plays were the norm for Winfield as opposing teams continually challenged the undersized cornerback only to find that bone-jarring tackles and sticky coverage come from the heart, not the height, of a man.

"You have to have that attitude that lets your opponents know that you want them to pass or run in your direction," Winfield said. "I am looking forward to being challenged through the air and on the ground, as we're eager to prove that our No. 1 ranking is well-deserved."

The confidence exuded by both Winfield and Plummer is a testament to their abilities, especially since they are oftentimes left alone to defend big, fast receivers in search of the end zone.

"A lot of times we have to put our corners out there on an island and expect them to defend their man one-on-one," Tenuta said. "It's a tough task, but one we feel Antoine and Ahmed can handle. Now we have to start working on finding a couple of other guys that have the ability and the determination to perform at that same level."

While Tenuta searches the ranks for fearless and talented reserves to step up when needed, he rests assured that it's his four starters, along with McClellion, who will be responsible for keeping opponents out of the end zone at crunch time.

"We'll start with our nucleus of the five players who performed so well for us last season and then just see who else works their way into more playing time," Tenuta said.

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL PREVIEW: SPECIAL TEAMS

Buckeyes Seek Improvement In Kicking Game

By RICH LEONARDO

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

There's always excitement in the air when the start of a new season of Ohio State football is just on the horizon, and this season seems to have a very special air about it considering that the Buckeyes have been tabbed as the preseason No. 1 team in the country.

If the 1998 season is to indeed be special, then the performance of OSU's special teams will undoubtedly play a major role in the Buckeyes' success.

"I feel in order to be a championship-caliber team, your special teams have to perform at a consistently high level," OSU assistant coach Bill Conley said. "At least one, if not more than one, game this season will be decided by the play of our special teams, so their importance cannot be overlooked."

One area of OSU's special teams that appears to be rock-solid is punting. The Buckeyes return senior punter Brent Bartholomew, who averaged a Big Ten-leading 45.2 yards per kick last year. That average was also good for 10th nationally.

"I think Brent is one of the top punters in the country," OSU assistant coach Chuck Stobart said. "He's matured, he's gotten stronger, and he has the ability to adjust his punts to whatever the situation calls for."

"He's been our punter for three years now and we're going to miss him terri-

bly next year, and while he may not statistically lead the nation in punting due to some of the other guys out West kicking in light air, I believe there's nobody in college football who kicks the ball higher or farther than Brent."

Last season's performance earned Bartholomew first-team All-Big Ten honors. In addition to his lofty average and consistent hang time, he also placed 20 of his punts inside the opponents' 20-yard line.

In OSU's 23-7 victory over Iowa, Bartholomew punted so effectively that he helped OSU hold the Hawkeyes' All-American return specialist Tim Dwight to zero return yards.

"Last year I started working on my punting year-round and I've kept that practice up throughout this year as well," Bartholomew said. "If I can improve as much this season as I did last year, then my expectations for myself will be to become not only the top punter in the Big Ten, but also in the nation."

"There's no secret to it. Hard work and perseverance equal substantial rewards, and both myself and this team



Brent Bartholomew

are ready to reap our just due rewards."

Stultz Also Excels

Long hours of hard work have also been turned in by sophomore place-kicker Dan Stultz, who's looking to team with Bartholomew to give the Buckeyes one of the most potent kicking combos in college football.

"Along with Brent's punting, one of the other positive aspects of our special teams is the return of our place-kicker, Dan Stultz," Conley said. "He needs to stay healthy, of course, and kick the ball with a little more consistency because his leg strength is already outstanding."

"Also our long snapper, Kevin Houser, is back again, so our group of specialists are both talented and experienced."

Last season Stultz led the Buckeyes in scoring with 92 points, which also placed him fifth in the Big Ten. Stultz hit 15 of 25 field goal attempts and 47 of 48 extra points. His 55-yard field goal against Indiana was the second longest in Ohio State history and the longest in Ohio Stadium by a Buckeye.

"I missed 10 field goals last year, so during the off-season I concentrated my efforts on improving my accuracy by kicking over and over from the outside hash marks," Stultz said.

"The field goals from the middle of the field don't come all that often, so I worked repeatedly on being more accurate from all over the field. Going into this season, I feel confident that I will hit 85 to 90 percent of all the field goals I attempt, regardless of their distance."

While Stultz has worked hard during the off-season on his field-goal accuracy, he's more than aware of how important his duties as a kickoff specialist are to the team's success.

"Placement and accuracy are also important on kickoffs and right now I am consistently kicking the ball down to between the 5-yard line and inside the end zone," Stultz said.

"With my kickoffs traveling so well and my field goals becoming more accurate, I'm really looking forward to attempting even longer and more crucial field goals this year."

Long field goal attempts were nonexistent at Ohio State in the years prior to Stultz's arrival. But if the strong-legged sophomore can prove that he can be accurate as well as long, then Buckeye fans can come to expect points where OSU used to have to punt.

"If Danny shows us that he can consistently hit the longer field goals, then we'll certainly let him continue to attempt them from even farther distances," Conley said. "Again, his leg strength is not an issue, and if he does become more consistent, then I feel he has the ability to be one of the best place-kickers to ever play here."

Many Happy Returns

While OSU's kickoffs and punts are

in the capable hands of Stultz and Bartholomew, the Buckeye coaching staff is also looking for game-breaking plays from their kickoff and punt return units.

"We spend a lot of time on punt and kickoff coverage and returns every day in practice because they are a very important part of our game plan," Conley said. "Having the right people out on the field during our special teams plays can mean the difference in a game and a season."

Juniors David Boston and Gary Berry returned the majority of punts for OSU last year and look to do so again this season, but several of the new freshmen may get a chance at returning punts as well.

"A punt return is such a natural type thing that it's really hard to work on it because you never know what angle the punt coverage guys will be coming in at," Boston said. "I mean I work on fielding punts and such, but the moves after I make the catch are pretty much done on the fly."

Last season Boston returned 47 punts for 392 yards and an 8.3 average per return, while Berry returned only three punts.

"I try to work on fielding punts, but really you're pretty much on your own once the ball is in your hands as finding a gap or using a certain move is really more instinct than anything else," Berry said.

"A well-executed punt return can change a game in an instant, just as a mishandled punt can result in a turnover, so it's a vital part of the game and a great opportunity to make something positive happen for your team."

Returning kickoffs for the Buckeyes was a task handled last season by junior Michael Wiley and sophomore Ken-Yon Rambo, although this year may see the likes of sophomores Reggie Germany, Derek Combs and Jerry Westbrook along with the possibility of a few freshmen getting their opportunities as well.

"I learned a long time ago that finding the right guys to play on special teams is essential to those special teams being successful," Stobart said. "Not everybody has the desire and the instinct to block or return kicks, so when you find players who handle those tasks well, then you've found the keys to building truly special teams."

"Our guys have a lot of pride, and I think you'll see evidence of that pride demonstrated on our special teams throughout the season."

Last year Wiley averaged 26.5 yards per kickoff return as he ran back 13 kickoffs for 344 yards and one touchdown. Wiley's touchdown was a 100-yard effort during OSU's 44-13 dismantling of Bowling Green. Rambo, meanwhile, returned just four kickoffs for 100 yards and a 25.0 average per return.

"Our special teams are the ones who really have to rise to the occasion and be dominant this year," Conley said.

"Our punt and kickoff return and punt and kickoff coverage units have to work extremely hard and play with a level of enthusiasm if they're going to make the difference in our season the way I believe they must."

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THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

Time To See If Season Lives Up To Its Billing

It seems like the entire John Cooper tenure at Ohio State has been building up to this 1998 season. Throughout Cooper's stay in Columbus, there have been hints of that magical season which all football fans live for. Unfortunately, that type of season has eluded the Buckeyes for 30 years.

Now it seems that the players are in place, the coaching staff is in place, the schedule is favorable, and — maybe — even the stars are properly aligned for a run at the national championship. Virtually every pollster in the country seems to agree, as the Buckeyes are a solid preseason No. 1.

I'm not going to get too hyped up about this lofty preseason ranking. This time of year the Buckeyes always look strong to me. And when you consider how many times in the '90s the Bucks have been knocking on the national championship door well into November and fallen short, I'm not going to buy my tickets to Tempe just yet. There's a lot of football to be played between now and Jan. 4.

Still, on paper at least, you have to think the Buckeyes have as good a chance as anyone to finish the season No. 1.

Fred Pagac has turned the Ohio State defense from a tentative group and a team weakness to an attacking strength. And with nine starters back from last year's unit that was seventh in the country in total defense, there is no reason — barring academic casualties or injuries — to think the Buckeyes won't again be among the nation's best.

The starters in the secondary, led by Antoine Winfield, are outstanding, and the depth should be stronger this year as the backups all have an added year of experience and a newcomer such as Nate Clements might also lead an immediate hand.

At linebacker, Andy Katzenmoyer won the Butkus Award last year while only a sophomore, which pretty much speaks for itself. Jerry Rudzinski is steady on one side and the addition of the speed and athleticism of Na'il Diggs on the other should keep this a unit in the tradition of Ohio State linebackers of years past. Only a lack of experience among the reserves is a potential problem here.

The line was the weakest link of the defense last year and probably remains the unit's biggest question mark. Fortunately for Pagac, he has a wealth of young, talented athletes to shuttle in and out this year so at the least the line will be fresher this season.

Converted linebacker and junior college transfer James Cotton seems to be a wild card here. If he and the other young linemen can put more pressure on opposing quarterbacks this season, it will be very tough to score on the Buckeyes.

On offense, you have to be excited about the OSU passing game. Joe Germaine finally gets the quarterback job to himself and he has an unlimited selection of receivers to throw to. Germaine has already proven that he can be virtually unstoppable through the air with his touch, ability to see all receivers, and willingness to stay in the pocket, even under intense pressure. His trademark cool demeanor is bound to come in handy in some tight spot down the road.

David Boston's and Dee Miller's numbers are concrete proof they are among the nation's elite. They are a handful for any secondary. But if Germaine and the Buckeyes want to really stretch out a

THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH
Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

defense, they can add the likes of potential stars Reggie Germany or Ken-Yon Rambo or a host of other fine receivers to the line-up along with Boston and Miller to truly create a nightmare for opposing secondaries.

The Buckeyes can also give more freedom to Miller and Boston by making better use of John Lumpkin as a receiver this season. The huge tight end looks like NFL material and should be another asset for Ohio State.

Even with all that aerial firepower, a Buckeye team is never going to go too far without a strong running attack. The three players primed to get the most carries have — combined — gained over 500 yards less in their careers than Eddie George did alone in his Heisman Trophy season. Yet it would seem that among Michael Wiley, Joe Montgomery and Derek Combs, there is more than enough talent to provide ground balance to the vaunted Buckeye air attack if they get any kind of blocking from the offensive line.

And there lies the potential Achilles' heel of the 1998 Ohio State football team.

The good news is that all five projected starters were starters for part or all of last season. That's also the bad news, as the offensive line was the team's weakest link in 1997.

While Rob and Kurt Murphy, Ben Gilbert, Tyson Walter and Brooks Burris all should be improved with another year under their belts, they still have to prove that they are a national championship-caliber unit. They — along with the graduate Eric Gohlstein — certainly didn't look to be of that caliber against perennial contender Florida State in the Sugar Bowl.

And take a look at the depth chart. Unless a couple of up-and-comers get healthy, there's not a lot for the Buckeyes in reserve.

I really believe the offensive line to be the key to the season for Ohio State. I don't care how good Germaine and his receivers are. You can't pass if you're on your back. And, as mentioned, the running backs will need a solid performance from the line if they are to be effective.

If the offensive line plays up to the level of some of the great OSU lines of the past, well, maybe the Buckeyes will end up No. 1 in the only poll that really counts, the one after the Fiesta Bowl.

On The Spot

The guys on the offensive line aren't the only Buckeyes on the spot. Here are some others I see as needing to prove something this year if the Buckeyes are to go all the way.

• **Germaine** — Many have clamored for Germaine to be the full-time starter for the past two seasons. It's his show now. Will he be as effective now that defenses can prepare just for him? He has yet to beat Michigan, and despite all his yardage against Penn State last season, the Buckeyes lost.

• **Katzenmoyer and Winfield** — Buckeye fans will tell you that they are the best at their positions in the country. But the two need to step up and make the big plays in big games that can put those contests in the win column for the Buckeyes,

the type of big plays that helped earn Michigan's Charles Woodson the Heisman Trophy. Solid play is great, but plays like the hit Katzenmoyer put on Missouri's Corby Jones last year to turn that game win championships.

• **Mike Jacobs** — Now in his second season as offensive coordinator, Jacobs has to prove that the Buckeyes didn't lose a beat when Walt Harris, still thought by many to be OSU's offensive guru during his stay in Columbus, left for Pitt. The weapons are there. Will Jacobs leave his mark on OSU offensive football?

And, of course:

• **John Cooper** — Cooper's defenders are quick to point out that Tom Osborne at Nebraska and Bobby Bowden at Florida State were often the bridesmaids, yet they are still considered among the coaching elite. However, there is one difference between Cooper and Osborne and Bowden. The latter two both eventually won national championships.

Is this the year Cooper joins them in winning it all, finally proving his detractors wrong?

Follow The Bucks On The Road

As many of you know, the Buckeye

Boosters trip to Illinois has been canceled. However, Prime Tours and San-Dar Tours are both offering unique trips to the game on Oct. 10. The San-Dar trip includes a side trip to the Indy 500 Hall of Fame, while the Prime trip features Prime's patented "guaranteed OSU victory."

For details on the Prime Tours trip to Illinois or trips to Northwestern or Indiana, call Uniglobe Travel Resources at (614) 459-5455. San-Dar Tours can be reached at (800) 743-8345.

If you live in the Champaign, Ill., area or want to drive over for the Illinois game, Ohio State's alumni association will be having a brunch four hours before kickoff and game tickets are included in the cost of the brunch. The event will be held at the Clarion Hotel, formerly the Chancellor Inn, at 1501 Neil St. and costs \$50 with game ticket or \$25 without. For more information, call Doak Ewing at (630) 527-8890.

Alumni brunches for the West Virginia and Northwestern games are sold out, but tickets still remain for the Indiana and Iowa alumni events. These brunches include tickets to the game also. For more information, call the alumni association at (614) 292-2500.

There is also still space available for Buckeye Boosters' one-day charter air trip to Iowa on Nov. 14. This is a great way to see a big game on the road but not spoil your entire weekend. For more information, see the Boosters ad on page 34 or call Carole Miller at (614) 895-5525.

BUCKEYE SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL

The football schedule appears on page 4 with Ohio State Insider.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

Sept. 1 INDIANA STATE, 7 p.m.; 4 at Hawaii Tournament vs. Florida; 5 at Hawaii; 6 at Hawaii Tournament vs. UCLA; 11 BUCKEYE INVITATIONAL vs. XAVIER, 7 p.m.; 12 BUCKEYE INVITATIONAL vs. OREGON STATE or NEBRASKA, 5 or 7 p.m.; 15 MARSHALL, 7 p.m.; 16 PITTSBURGH, 7 p.m.; 20 CLEVELAND STATE, 2 p.m.; 23 at Penn State; 26 at Minnesota.

Oct. 2 at Purdue; 3 at Illinois; 9 WISCONSIN, 7 p.m.; 10 IOWA, 7 p.m.; 16 MICHIGAN STATE, 7 p.m.; 17 MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; 23 at Northwestern; 24 at Indiana; 30 ILLINOIS, 7 p.m.; 31 PURDUE, 7 p.m.

Nov. 6 at Iowa; 7 at Wisconsin; 11 PENN STATE, 7 p.m.; 13 MINNESOTA, 7 p.m.; 20 at Michigan; 21 at Michigan State; 27 INDIANA, 7 p.m.; 28 NORTHWESTERN, 7 p.m.

FIELD HOCKEY

Sept. 2 LOUISVILLE, 5 at Virginia; 7 at St. Louis; 19 at St. Joseph's; 20 at Temple; 25 NORTHWESTERN; 27 IOWA; 30 CENTRAL MICHIGAN.

Oct. 4 PENN STATE, 9 at Michigan; 11 at Michigan State; 14 MIAMI (OHIO); 16 at Northwestern; 18 at Iowa; 23 MICHIGAN STATE; 25 MICHIGAN; 28 at Kent.

Nov. 1 at Penn State; 6-8 Big Ten Tournament at Michigan State.

MEN'S SOCCER

Sept. 1 DAYTON; 4 EVANSVILLE; 6 FURMAN; 11 at Butler; 13 BOWLING GREEN; 18 at Eastern Illinois; 20 at Northwestern; 25 at Creighton vs. Drake; 27 at Creighton; 30 at Wright State.

Oct. 4 WISCONSIN; 7 XAVIER; 11 MICHIGAN STATE; 18 at Penn State; 25 INDIANA; 28 CLEVELAND STATE.

Nov. 1 CINCINNATI; 7 at Virginia; 13-15 Big Ten Tournament at Northwestern.

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Sept. 1 at Evansville; 6 at Louisville; 9 at Dayton; 11 PURDUE; 15 XAVIER; 18 ILLINOIS; 20 at Indiana; 25 MICHIGAN STATE; 27 MICHIGAN.

Oct. 2 at Penn State; 7 WEST VIRGINIA; 9 at Iowa; 11 at Minnesota; 16 WISCONSIN; 18 NORTHWESTERN; 23 WISCONSIN-GREEN BAY; 25 DETROIT; 27 at Wright State; 31 ARKANSAS.

Nov. 6-8 Big Ten Tournament at Penn State.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

See Court Report on page 64.

ICE HOCKEY

Note: Home games after Dec. 5 played in Jerome

Schottenstein Center.

Oct. 2 WILFRID LAURIER, 7 p.m.; 9 at Ice Breaker Invitational vs. Boston College at Minneapolis, 4 p.m.; 10 at Ice Breaker Invitational vs. St. Lawrence or Minnesota at Minneapolis 5 or 6 p.m.; 16 at Lake Superior, 7 p.m.; 17 at Ferris State, 7 p.m.; 23 at Notre Dame, 7 p.m.; 24 at Michigan State, 7 p.m.; 31 at Niagara, 5 p.m.

Nov. 6 at Michigan State, 7 p.m.; 7 at Western Michigan, 7 p.m.; 13 MICHIGAN STATE, 7 p.m.; 14 NORTHERN MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; 20 MIAMI (OHIO), 7 p.m.; 21 at Miami (Ohio), 7 p.m.; 27-28 at Alaska-Fairbanks, 7 p.m.

Dec. 4-5 NOTRE DAME, 7 p.m.; 27 at Mariucci Classic vs. Boston University at Minneapolis, 6 p.m.; 28 at Mariucci Classic vs. Princeton or Minnesota at Minneapolis, 4 or 7 p.m.

Jan. 2 MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.; 7 LAKE SUPERIOR, 7 p.m.; 9 LAKE SUPERIOR, noon; 12 at Miami (Ohio), 7 p.m.; 15 at Cornell, 7 p.m.; 17 at Colgate, noon; 21 FERRIS STATE, 7 p.m.; 23 MICHIGAN, 8 or 9 p.m.; 29-30 WESTERN MICHIGAN, 7 p.m.

Feb. 5 at Bowling Green, 7 p.m.; 6 at Michigan, 7 p.m.; 12-13 at Northern Michigan, 7 p.m.; 19 FERRIS STATE, 7 p.m.; 20 ALASKA-FAIRBANKS, noon.

March 2 BOWLING GREEN, 7 p.m.; 8 at Bowling Green, 7 p.m.; 12-14 CCHA Quarterfinals at campus sites; 19 CCHA Semifinals at Detroit; 20 CCHA Finals at Detroit; 26-27 NCAA East Regional at Worcester, Mass.; 27-28 NCAA West Regional at Madison, Wis.

April 1 NCAA Semifinals at Anaheim, Calif.; 3 NCAA Finals at Anaheim, Calif.

1999 OSU FOOTBALL

Sept. 11 UCLA; 18 OHIO U.; 25 CINCINNATI.

Oct. 2 WISCONSIN; 9 PURDUE; 16 at Penn State; 23 at Minnesota; 30 IOWA.

Nov. 6 at Michigan State; 13 ILLINOIS; 20 at Michigan.

2000 OSU FOOTBALL

Sept. 2 FRESNO STATE; 9 at Arizona; 16 MIAMI (OHIO); 23 PENN STATE.

Oct. 7 at Wisconsin; 14 MINNESOTA; 21 at Iowa; 28 at Purdue.

Nov. 4 MICHIGAN STATE; 11 at Illinois; 18 MICHIGAN.

2001 OSU FOOTBALL

(Non-Conference Only)

Sept. 8 AKRON; 15 TBA; 22 at UCLA.

2002 OSU FOOTBALL

(Non-Conference Only)

Sept. 7 KENT STATE; 14 TBA; 21 at Cincinnati (at Paul Brown Field).